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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 SUVA 000195

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [AMGT](#) [ASEC](#) [FJ](#)
SUBJECT: MEETING WITH FIJI INTERIM FM NAILATIKAU: U.S.-FIJI
RELATIONS; DAS DAVIES VISIT; PICL; AND NEC ISSUE

REF: A. STATE 36142
[1](#)B. STATE 36888
[1](#)C. STATE 41666
[1](#)D. SUVA 193
[1](#)E. SUVA 158

Classified By: Amb. Dinger. Sec. 1.4 (B,D)

Summary

[1](#)1. (C) The Ambassador called on Fiji interim Foreign Minister Nailatikau on April 4, as instructed. Nailatikau made clear that the interim government comprehends the U.S. position and motivations regarding the Fiji coup. Fiji "has been down this road before" and is the one that "erred." Representatives from the international community are raising the same issues, and Fiji must respond. Nailatikau welcomed the coming visit of EAP DAS Davies and agreed to meet with him. Nailatikau said the interim government understands why it hasn't received an invitation for the Pacific Islands Conference of Leaders meeting in Washington next month. The Ambassador noted any invitation must await political developments in Fiji. Per Refs C, D, and E, the Ambassador also raised the diplomatic status for USG overseers of the New Embassy Compound (NEC) in Suva, observed that MFA's approach varies from normal practice everywhere else in the world, and stressed the need for a rapid resolution. MFA PermSec Ligairi, in the meeting, noted he agrees with the U.S. position. Nailatikau agreed to address the matter shortly. End summary.

Interim Fiji Government fully understands U.S. views

[1](#)2. (C) As instructed ref A, the Ambassador met with Fiji interim Foreign Minister Nailatikau and MFA Permanent Secretary Ligairi on April 4. Nailatikau confirmed he and

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the interim government understand U.S. views regarding the Fiji coup and its aftermath. He noted: "we are the ones that erred, and now we need to correct that. We shouldn't be surprised." He expressed hope that dialogues with the international community can facilitate progress. He noted that he had just met with European Union diplomats in preparation for EU-Fiji consultations under the Cotonou Agreement on April 18 in Brussels. He would meet next with a representative from the Commonwealth. The international community, including the U.S., is all delivering the same themes, and Fiji now must respond.

DAS Davies visit

13. (C) The Ambassador said the visit of EAP DAS Davies to Fiji on April 11-12 would be an opportunity for Fiji to hear directly Washington's views from the senior policy level; and, of course, it will be an opportunity for the interim government to make its points as well. We noted a request for meetings with Commodore Bainimarama, Nailatikau, and interim Finance Minister Chaudhry, as well as with a wide variety of other interlocutors. Nailatikau said he will definitely be available on April 11 for a meeting. He offered no response about Bainimarama or Chaudhry.

PICL invitation awaits developments

14. (C) The Ambassador noted that East West Center invitations for the Pacific Islands Conference of Leaders meeting in Washington have gone out, but that an invitation for Fiji awaits political developments. Nailatikau expressed complete understanding of the U.S. position and said the interim government realized an invitation would require progress on the return to democracy. He said, "You are hosting, so it is your decision."

Diplomatic status for NEC personnel: an update

15. (C) Given the opportunity, the Ambassador raised the issue of diplomatic status for State Department personnel being assigned to Embassy Suva to oversee construction of the New Embassy Compound (see refs C, D, and E). He described normal practice everywhere in the world, including in Fiji in the recent past, and he mentioned the significant injection of construction funding that is now at serious risk. He stressed the need for a decision within the next week or so. Nailatikau took the points, including the need for a rapid response. PermSec Ligairi interjected: "I agree with the Ambassador on this issue." Nailatikau asked Ligairi to have

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the issue ready for his consideration before the end of this week.

Comment

16. (C) Interim Foreign Minister Nailatikau is an affable man. As he noted, he and Fiji "have been down this road before," so they understand that the rest of the world is not happy about developments. His mention that it is Fiji, not the international community, that needs to provide assurances is useful. However, the reality is that Commodore Bainimarama and the RFMF are the decision-makers, not MFA, on the issues of political reforms and time-lines. Ligairi's reiteration, in the presence of Nailatikau, that he agrees with the USG on the NEC accreditation issue is encouraging. Nobody at MFA is saying that the NEC issue is being linked to the political gulf that currently exists between the U.S. and Fiji. Still, we thought it useful to note significant economic, as well as diplomatic, impact if the NEC becomes derailed.
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